

Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) today announced \$1.26 million in funding for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to acquire 6,817 acres of land located next to and Big Bend Ranch State Park in Presidio County. The total cost of the land will be \$2,520,000.

‘Further acquisition of park land will help ensure quality of life, tourism and benefits our local economy,’ said Rodriguez. ‘This land will further enhance our system of state and national parks that see millions of visitors each year. Conserving this land will ensure future generations can enjoy its beauty and utility.’

The proposal will result in permanent protection and management of ecologically significant Rio Grande riparian habitat, low desert flats, desert grasslands, hills to an elevation of roughly 4600 feet and extremely important desert springs and associated cienegas (wetlands). Ownership will improve the ability to manage and protect tens of thousands of acres of adjacent park land from grazing (Presidio County being an open range county), water withdrawal, and other detrimental land uses.

Big Bend Ranch State Park is the largest state park in Texas with over 300,000 acres of Chihuahuan Desert wilderness in a remarkably rugged, remote and unpopulated setting. The park extends along the Rio Grande from southeast of Presidio to near Lajitas in both Brewster and Presidio Counties. Embracing some of the most remote and rugged terrain in the Southwest, it encompasses two mountain ranges containing ancient extinct volcanoes, precipitous canyons, and waterfalls. The area has been a crossroads of human activities for over 11,000 years, as diverse people and cultures have been drawn by the abundant resources of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo corridor.

These funds are made available from a grant from the Land and Water Conservation fund.